

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
WARREN GRANT MAGNUSON CLINICAL CENTER
NURSING & PATIENT CARE SERVICES

POLICY: Observation Levels for Behavioral Health Patients

Behavioral Health inpatients will be assessed upon admission and on an ongoing basis. Nursing and medical staff will use this assessment to collaboratively determine observation level.

Observation level is documented as a medical order in the medical record by a licensed independent practitioner. All observation checks will be documented on the unit's Checks Record Sheet. Observation checks more intensive than half-hourly checks will be documented by shift in the Interdisciplinary Notes section of the Medical Record.

PURPOSE: To promote a safe and therapeutic environment based on the patient's needs.

ADDENDUM: Appendix (1) Guidelines for Implementation of Observation Levels.

Approved:

_____/s/_____
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Formulated: 12/94
Implemented: 1/95
Revised: 5/00, 2/02, 10/03
NURSshare: Policies/ observation levels

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Addendum to Policy: Observation Levels for Behavioral Health Patients

Appendix (1) Guidelines for Implementation of Observation Levels

1. Levels of observation are listed in order of increasing intensity:
 - Hourly observation: An assigned nursing staff member is required to make a visual check of the patient every hour.
 - Every thirty minutes observation: An assigned nursing staff member is required to make a visual check of the patient every thirty minutes.
 - Every fifteen minutes observation: An assigned nursing staff member is required to make a visual check of the patient every fifteen minutes.
 - Eye contact constant observation: An assigned nursing staff member is required to keep the patient within his/her line of sight at all times.
 - Arm's length constant observation: An assigned nursing staff member is required to remain with the patient at a distance no greater than an arm's length and is required to keep the patient within view at all times.
2. A nurse may implement a more intense level of observation based on a change in the patient's clinical status. A medical order is required within 12 hours of the time the nurse has implemented a more intense level of observation.
3. To implement a less intense level of observation, the nurse will collaborate with the physician and obtain medical order at the time of implementation of the less intense level of observation.